



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **RODENT TESTS POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS**

### ***Use Wet Cleaning Methods, Don't Sweep or Vacuum Rodent Droppings***

A deer mouse trapped north of Vista during routine monitoring this week has tested positive for the sometimes-deadly hantavirus, County officials said Friday.

So far this year, 32 rodents have tested positive for the disease around the County, compared to 21 in 2010. County officials said that infected mice in the wild rarely pose a threat to people, but that they do serve as a reminder that people should be extra careful when cleaning rodent infestations if they find them in their homes.

"People should never sweep up or vacuum rodent droppings and nesting materials," said County Environmental Health Director Jack Miller. "Instead, they should ventilate closed areas and use wet cleaning methods with a 10 percent bleach solution or other full strength disinfectant."

The best way to prevent getting the disease is to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds by sealing all holes larger than the size of a dime, officials said.

Wild rodents, primarily deer mice, carry hantavirus. People can contract it by inhaling dust particles from rodent droppings and nesting materials that contain the virus. The virus can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), which begins with flu-like symptoms, but can graduate to severe breathing difficulties and even death. There is no vaccine or specific treatment for hantavirus.

#### **How to Avoid Exposure:**

- Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.
- Avoid rodent infested areas. Do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with feces and urine.
- Clean up rodent droppings and urine using the wet cleaning method described below.

#### **Use "wet-cleaning" methods to prevent inhaling the virus:**

- **DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM INFESTED AREAS.**
- Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup of water), or other full strength disinfectant onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding areas and let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning. Clean with a sponge or a mop.
- Place disinfected rodents and debris into separate plastic bags, seal them and discard in the trash.
- Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method. Thoroughly wash your bare hands with soap and water.

For more information, contact the County Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 or visit <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/pests/hantavirus.html>. Watch: ["Hantavirus - The Airborne Menace."](#)

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